

National EPA-Tribal Science Council



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Presentation Outline:

- Who We Are
- Tribal Science Priorities
- Tribal Traditional Lifeways: Risk Assessment and Health & Well Being
- In Conclusion



Why the TSC was formed ...

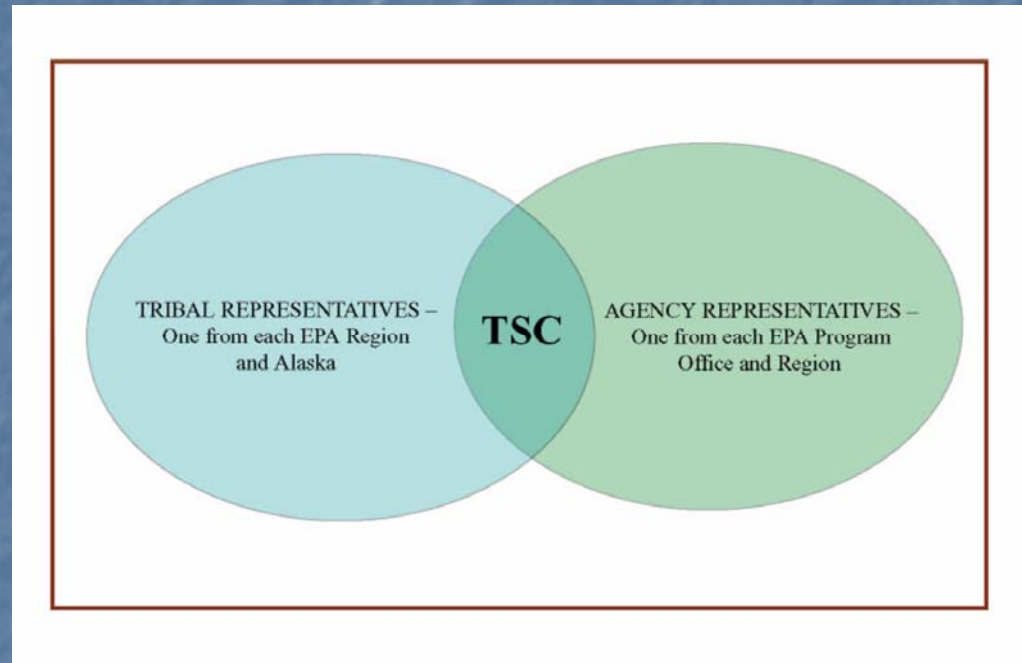
- Formation requested by National Tribal Caucus in 1999
- Provide a cross-Agency forum to discuss national tribal priority science issues
- Identify the most appropriate ways to address these issues
- Coordinate with the National Tribal Caucus to integrate science priorities into the Agency's annual planning and budget process

Who We Are ...

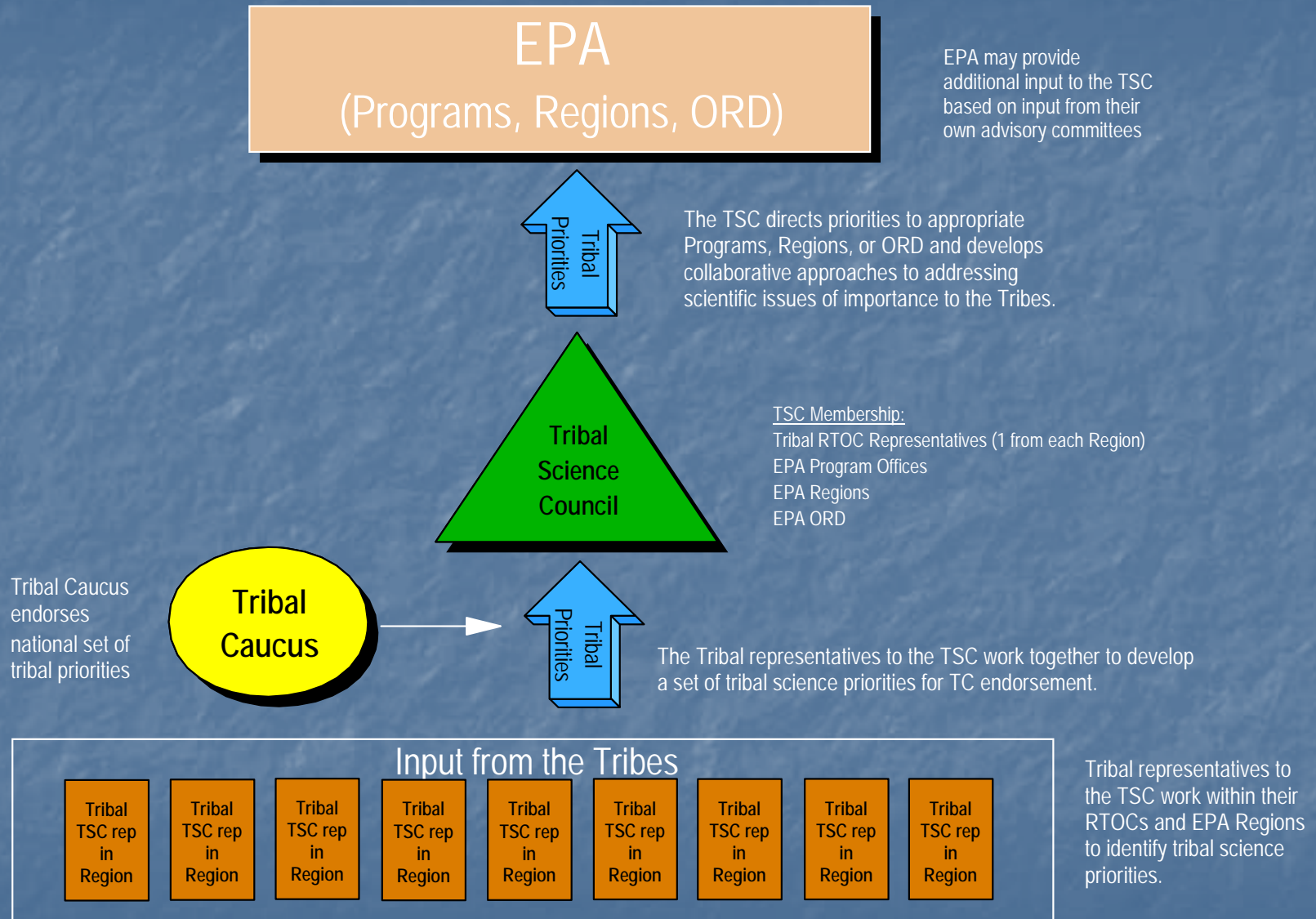
- Scientists educated in Western Science and also in Tribal Traditional Knowledge
- A group vital to understanding and addressing Tribal science issues, in order to protect the health of Tribal communities

How TSC Operates

- Tribally driven
- Collaborative effort
- Cross-Agency consideration



Addressing Tribal Science Priorities through the TSC



National Tribal Science Priorities



Development of the Priorities

- Tribally-driven process
- National level priorities
- Purpose:
 - Understand tribal issue and related EPA activities
 - Develop collaborative solutions
 - Consider in Agency's planning process

Tribal Traditional Lifeways



- Tribal traditional lifeways encompass the unique cultural, spiritual, economic, and language practices pursued by tribal communities.
- The term is meant to replace “subsistence”.
- Described as an “umbrella” issue.

Priorities

- Endocrine disrupting chemicals
- Dioxin and dioxin-like compounds
- Persistent bioaccumulative toxics source reduction
- Pharmaceuticals in wastewater
- Habitat loss
- Environmental triggers for respiratory distress with special emphasis on mold
- Contaminated precipitation
- Biological stressors

Considerations for each Priority

- "Risk" – exposure and impact
- Education
- Research
- Environmental Justice
- Restoration

Next Steps

- Work internally with Program Offices and ORD to address the issues and concerns raised in the Priorities paper.
- This will be done by involving the EPA Program Office TSC rep with the Program Office Tribal Coordinator to discuss relevant priorities.

Tribal Traditional Lifeways: Risk Assessment and Health & Well Being



Background

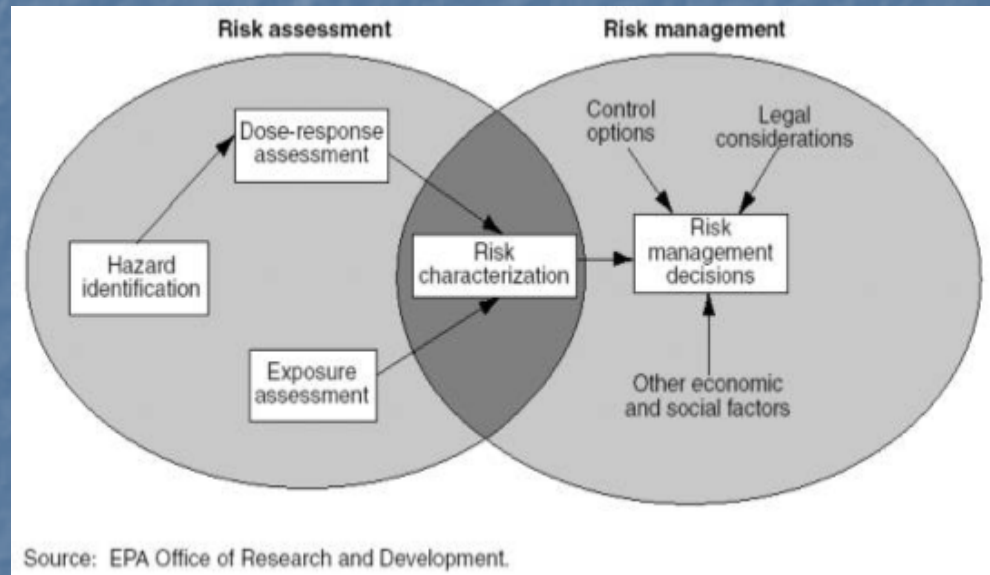
- Identified tribal traditional lifeways as an important, overarching issue by TSC Tribal reps
- Conducted workshops to explore the topic and gather issues and ideas from tribal representatives and risk practitioners :
 - Risk Assessment and Health and Well Being (February '03)
 - Health and Well Being (May '03)
 - Addressing Tribal Traditional Lifeways in EPA's Risk Assessment Policies and Procedures (January '05)
- Developed paper summarizing information of tribal representatives and risk practitioners

Decision Making Processes

- Tribes assert that EPA's current environmental decision-making processes are not protective of tribal resources and lifeways.
 - Current risk scenarios and risk factors are geared toward urban settings in the United States and do not consider tribal traditional lifeways.
 - Risk management solutions identified from the current risk assessment methodologies often force tribes to alter activities that are core to their existence.
- Tribes request that EPA:
 - Integrate tribal traditional lifeways into EPA's current risk assessment policies and procedures
 - Develop a new concept for environmental decision making that EPA can consider---focusing on human and ecological health and well-being

Overview of Issue

- Short term: Integrate Tribal Traditional Lifeways into EPA's current **risk assessment** policies and processes



- Long term: Develop a **new paradigm** for EPA consideration that focuses on human and ecological well-being

Short term: Integrate Tribal Traditional Lifeways into EPA's current risk assessment

- Increase Educational Opportunities for Tribes on EPA's Risk Assessment Process
 - Risk assessment Paradigm
 - Risk Communication
 - Risk Ethics and informed consent
- Educating EPA on Tribal Values and Culture
- Outreach and Involvement of Tribes
 - Tribal Consultation
 - Formal Agreements Regarding Decision making
 - Tribal Resource Involvement
- Valuation of Natural Resources

Short term: Integrate Tribal Traditional Lifeways into EPA's current risk assessment

- Data Collection and Use
 - Incorporate Tribal Traditional Knowledge
 - Incorporate Qualitative Data
 - Appropriate Data Collection from Tribal Sites
 - Data Ownership and Confidentiality
 - Quality Assurance of Tribal Data

Short term: Integrate Tribal Traditional Lifeways into EPA's current risk assessment

■ Unique Tribal Exposures

- Tribes represent relatively small populations
- Tribes are tied to a fixed land and resource base
- Tribes possess unique dietary, religious and cultural practices
- Need to include more sensitive populations in risk assessment
- Demonstrate care when developing "Tribal default Values"
- Develop tribal exposure scenarios
- Incorporate qualitative versus quantitative tribal impacts

Long Term Issue

Develop a new paradigm

- Incorporate a Health-based Focus
- Focus on Risk Prevention
- Incorporate Cumulative Impacts
- Create a Holistic Paradigm---One that Incorporates Impacts to Community Health,
- Integrate Culture, Lifeways, Well-being and the Environment
- Include Health and Wellness Indicators
- Use a Cross-Media Approach
- Reflect the Precautionary Principle
- Recognize that for Some Tribes, a “Zero Contamination Policy” Exists
- Work with Tribes on a Government-to-Government Basis

In Conclusion

- Tribal Science Priorities
 - Identify and share information concerning similar Agency efforts
 - Incorporate needs into budget planning process
- Tribal Traditional Lifeways Issue Paper
 - Identify and support the involvement of appropriate Agency groups to consider Tribal Traditional Lifeways issues in Agency decision making
- Tribal Science Conference
 - Support participation of Agency and Tribal staff

Informational Resources

EPA's Science and American Indians website provides information on:

- National EPA-Tribal Science Council
- Science Topics
- Announcements – Events, News, Funding Opportunities

Distribution of bi-weekly electronic newsletter with recent information



<http://www.epa.gov/osp/tribes.htm>